

DC Gazette

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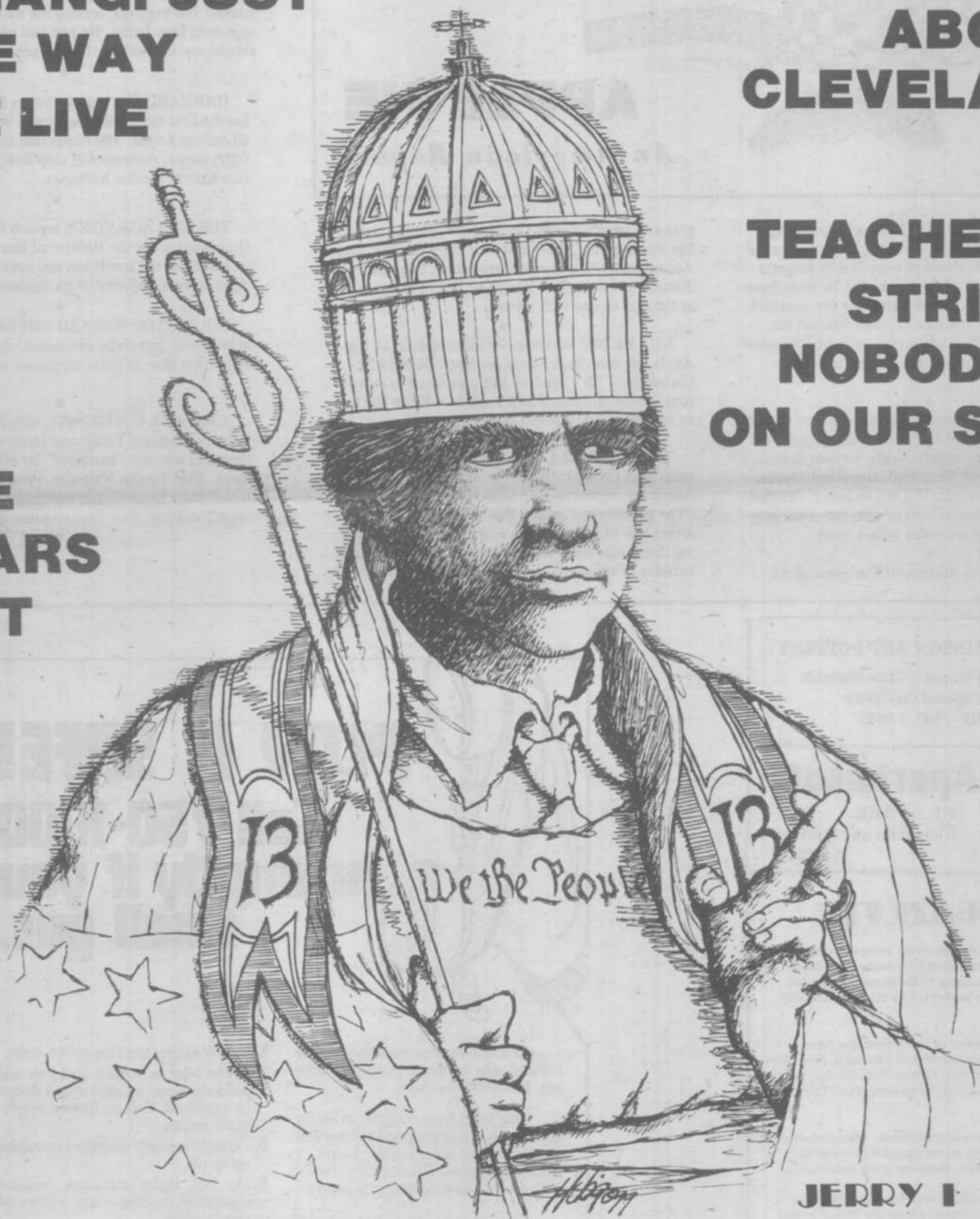
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**A GANG: JUST
THE WAY
WE LIVE**

**THE TRUTH
ABOUT
CLEVELAND**

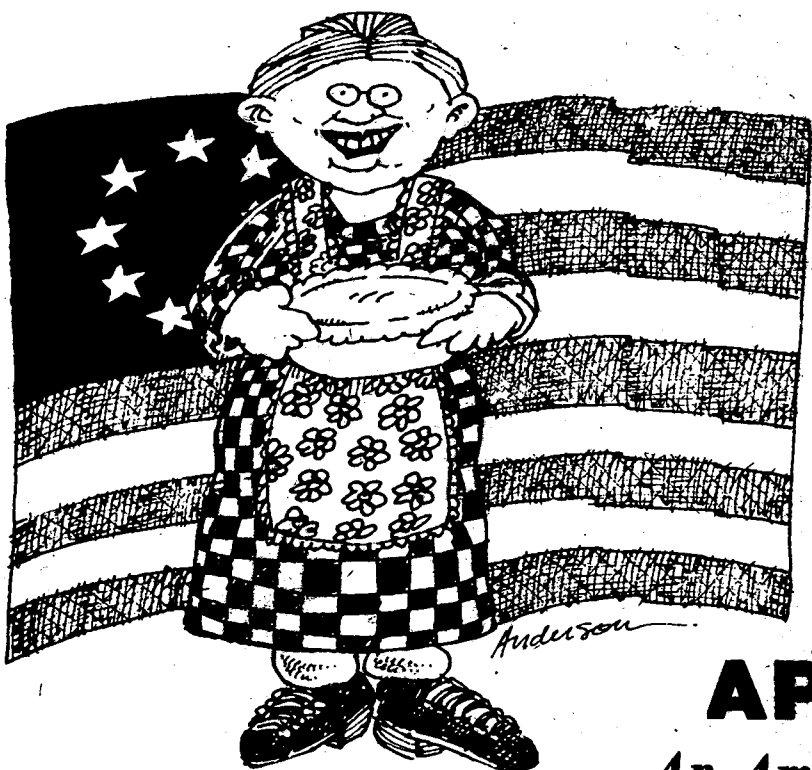
**TEACHERS'
STRIKE:
NOBODY'S
ON OUR SIDE**

**THE
SEARS
SUIT**



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"BUCKING THE SYSTEM SINCE 1966"



APPLE PIE

An American Report

THE CHIEF JUDGE of the Kansas Court of Appeals says he's getting tired of reading dirty books for obscenity cases: "The characters are totally forgettable and whole sections of the books can be interchanged among each other without disturbing the continuity, if any, of them." The Law Student Journal has suggested that perhaps student interns should be allowed to step in and relieve judges of this tiresome aspect of benchwork.

ARMY researchers have found in a study of women volunteers unaccustomed to running that jogging did not produce the much-vaunted high we hear about. The volunteers became frustrated, angry and depressed from jogging too much. The researchers concluded that the positive mental effects of exercise come only after having a lot of experience with a sport.

ACCORDING TO a number of European geolo-

gists and geophysicists, the distances around the earth has increased by 20 percent over the past 200 years. According to New Scientist magazine, this means the distance between New York and Tokyo is increasing at the rate of one inch a year.

KILLER BEE honey is the latest delight of Big Apple trendies. Says honey promoter Ronald De-Christoforo: "It's kind of like a pet rock in its appeal but the difference is it's edible." Killer bee honey sells for \$3.95 for less than six ounces.

THE SUPREME COURT has ruled that the requirement that US diplomats retire at 60 is constitutional. According to Morton Mintz in the Washington Post, "The government argued that the 60-and-out rule serves one of its legitimate and rational goals: assuring the competence and the mental and physical reliability of those who hold positions critical to US re-

lations with other countries." Besides, forced retirees can always become Supreme Court justices.

SOME RESEARCHERS at Penn State left application forms — all identical — in phone booths to see whether passers-by tried to return them. The only difference in the forms were the photos that were attached. Over six hundred people found the forms. The result: photos of good-looking people stimulated more returns than pictures of ordinary or plain-looking persons, and being fat was a real disadvantage. Even people who were overweight who found the photos of fat applicants rarely bothered to try to return them.

THE MALE giant water bug carries its babies around from conception to birth. During mating, the female water bug applies more than 100 self-stick fertilized eggs to her partner's back. Then she loses interest and bugs off, leaving the male to nurture the eggs until they hatch. We just feel someone will be able to use this information somehow.

HARVARD U is raising tuition \$450 next year but for the first time toilet paper will be provided free to all college dorms. HU hopes that by giving away the toilet paper, students will stop stealing rolls from lecture halls and other buildings.

THE VILLAGE VOICE reports that the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws is in serious financial condition and may be forced to close down a majority of its regional offices.

THE BOSTON HERALD AMERICAN tested seven brands of 'naturally sweetened' apple juice and found that four of them contained refined sugar.

A MANILA COLUMNIST, who is a leading spokesman for President Ferdinand Marcos, has advised businessmen who are "harrassed" by reporters to shoot them. Said Teodor Valencia, when reporters "intrude into private business and threaten business with adverse publicity, they deserve some violent reaction."

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Washington Gas

WASHINGTON GAS LIGHT COMPANY

IT SEEMS like March's Flotsam & Jetsam column on words and meaning will be an eternally unfinished one. We keep coming up with addenda. For example, we should note that the New York Times Sunday Magazine now features a column on language by William Safire and, unlike the Bernstein-Simon-Newman axis, Safire proves he loves the language as much as the rules. His first column delved into the use of Roman numerals (as in Jaws II) and reports that World War II did not become such officially until 1945. Before the Federal Register announced the belated decision, Franklin Roosevelt sought suggestions. Among them: "Teutonic Plague" and "Tyrants' War." FDR settled for "The War for Survival" but that worked out about as well as a "New Foundation." It should have been an easy matter. As far back as 1939, Time had called it the "second World War," and what Time calls things usually sticks. Safire also reports that when a neurologist discovered the "patella reflex" in the 19th century, he insisted — unlike his medical descendants — that it be called simply "knee jerk." He won out.

In contemporary contrast we were distressed to learn that the University of the District of Columbia is seeking additional money to establish "remedia-

tion laboratories," which, would you believe, are places where you teach someone to read and write. And the most recent surgeon general's report on smoking informs us that "Smoking is a behavior, a highly complex act which is accompanied by certain cognitions and hedonic states and based on various biochemical processes....The impetus for using behavior modification techniques has been provided by the belief that research procedures which operationalize definitions, emphasize well-controlled empirical research, and are derived from. . . ." Well, you finish it.

On the other hand, writer Bobby Kraft has made more constructive use of her time by coining the word 'piswilly' as in "Don't be a piswilly." She writes: "The root of the word is from 'pismire' — as in 'Aunt Demetria is a pismire.' (from 'On Borrowed Time'). That seemed rather strong to me, I guess, so I unconsciously modified to my ear. I can't precisely define it, unfortunately, but it more or less means, 'Oh, go ahead and try it!' and has some of 'Don't be a baby' and also some of 'Don't be a drip — live a little.' It sounds onomatopoeic to me, anyway. I discovered I'd made it up one night when I said it to my nephew and he asked what it meant and I

said look it up in the dictionary — and it wasn't there." We have proclaimed Bobby a true ferndoodle — a word we made up to describe people who make up good new words.

Finally, we are sorry to report that we heard a minister speak the other day of our "ongoing iniquity." If God really talks like that we don't want to know it until we have to."

DOCUMENTS released by the CIA indicate that the agency conducted far more extensive surveillance of citizens inside the US than has previously been admitted to. The CIA indexed the names of 50,000 individual members of the California Peace and Freedom Party, despite the fact that the CIA has previously claimed that it had indexed the names of no more than 16,000 Americans nationwide. Internal CIA memos indicate that the agency felt it was necessary to index the name of every member of the anti-war political party because some anti-war activists had conducted attacks against CIA facilities on college campuses.

— Advertisement —

On May 1st, 1979, ELECT

DICK BROWN

D.C. SCHOOL BOARD AT-LARGE

Number 3 on the Ballot

Affiliation

CHAIRMAN:

- Brent Elementary School Advisory Board
- Capitol Hill Citizens for Better Education, Inc.
- Library Service and Construction Act of the District of Columbia Library

VICE-CHAIRMAN:

- Capitol Hill Hospital Community Advisory Board

MEMBER:

- Educational Opportunity Committee
- Gallery 5 Art Committee
- D.C. Citizens for Better Public Education, Inc.
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.)
- Operation P.U.S.H.

What Has Dick Brown Done for Education?

- Worked as Education Specialist at the United Planning Organization (U.P.O.) as liaison between the Board of Education HEW and Higher Education.
- Community Organizer at C.I.C. Neighborhood Center (near Northeast).
- Worked with Welfare Mothers by forming a Clothes Committee, Title I Children, Petition the Board of Education to help bring to the D.C. Public School the present "Schools Without Walls" program.
- Worked on the following Committee with the D.C. Public School: Federal Government-Title #1 /Adult Education Program/ Special Education/Pre-School Program/Vocational Education/ Veterans Program
- Set up truancy program for student drop-outs with the D.C. government U.P.O. and D.C. Public Schools.
- Dick Brown held seminars on educational problems within the community and with ten community centers. He also worked and held programs in Drug Abuse and Prevention in cooperation with the D.C. Public Schools in the Anacostia area.

What Dick Brown Will Do if Elected? He Will Work Toward:

- Better working relations between the Board, Central Office, Teachers, Administrations, Parents, Students and the Community.
- Getting the Board back on the track of dealing with issues—not personalities, but putting emphasis on the continuing education of our children.
- Secure more constructive parent involvement.
- More bilingual and ethnic programs.
- Regaining our students, and preparing them for today's world and the future.
- Adequate funding for D.C. Public School System.
- More programs for students who drop or pushed out of school.
- Broad-based community participation on education through the full utilization of neighborhood schools.
- Making the D.C. Public Schools a family affair with everybody accountable—Teachers, Administrators, Parents, Students and the Community.
- Seeing that supplies and materials are delivered in the schools on time.

Dick Brown's Statement

"I am running for the Board, not against it. In my opinion, the problems of our educational system today do not stem from a lack of dedication and concern; they are not the result of inadequate educational theories, inadequate educational programs, or a lack of competence on the part of Superintendent Reed and our teachers. The chief problems arise from the fact that students and parents are not taking full advantage of what is now offered."

"I don't intend to go on the Board and tell anybody how to teach. We hire some of the best talent in the country for that, and I will support them. Where I intend to concentrate my efforts in on educational outreach, a missionary effort."

"They say that faith moves mountains, but Julius Hobson said faith won't move a marble unless you work at it. There is a mountain of ignorance and apathy out there, and I want to work on moving it."

CHUCK STONE

The Sears Suit

READERS of the Washington Star recently lost the services of Chuck Stone, who had been writing columns for the Star's new zoned editions. The problem, it seems, was that the Star's management did not want Stone writing on national issues, but as Stone pointed out in a letter to a friend, "As one of only eight black columnists in American, I ran into difficulty not commenting on those important national issues that critically affect black Americans, other minorities, working class people, women and low income groups — the five groups with whom I identify most closely." When the Star refused to run his column on the Sears suit, Stone called it quits.

The Gazette, believing in leaving no Stone spurned, invited Chuck to return — to these pages he once graced a number of years ago. Happily, he accepted and so will be appearing regularly in the Gazette. We begin, fittingly perhaps, with the column the Star wouldn't run.

IF ANY ONE company could be honored as one of the "great white corporate fathers" of equal rights for minorities and women, Sears, Roebuck & Co. could qualify easily for some kind of hall of fame award. That reputation is what dismayed many of Sears' liberal friends — and delighted its conservative enemies — when the nation's largest merchandiser filed a class-action suit against ten federal agencies to protest their "equal employment directives."

"Government actions [for equal rights]," claims Sears' chairman and chief executive officer, Edward R. Telling, "are working at cross purposes, hampering real progress and discouraging voluntary efforts."

The senior vice president of one of the nation's largest retailing chains chuckled at the paradox of Sears' grievance. "In the trade, Sears is really considered a liberal in fair employment." Further reaffirming its claim as your friendly civil rights salesman, Sears pulled a neat one by hiring the eminently respectable civil rights and constitutional lawyer, Charles Morgan Jr.

That, says a prominent black scholar, "is an exquisite combination of chutzpah and eclecticism."

Chutzpah is best defined as a kid who murders his parents and then begs the court for mercy because he is an orphan.

Eclecticism is an American Nazi Party member retaining the dean of Howard University Law School to defend him for assaulting two crippled elderly Hispanics.

In its lawsuit, Sears mournfully charges that its excessively white male workforce was created over the years "through the GI Bill of Rights, veterans' preference laws, the Selective Service system, restrictions on the number of women and blacks in the armed forces and the types of military assignments available to them, vocational and other educational programs."

Shucks, I'll go Sears one better. The real reason Sears' workforce had become so heavily *homo sapiens Caucasus* is because God is a white man who ordained that only white males could ratify the United States Constitution and blacks could not play major league baseball until 1947.

Subliminally, Sears may be following the wisdom of a shrewd army general — or was it a boxing manager? — who said the best defense is a good offense. For the last couple of years, Sears has been fighting the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's charge of discrimination against women and minorities. "There are those who might be tempted to view our action as a delaying tactic," wrote Telling in a letter to Sears' executives. "Nothing could be further from the truth."

As he wrote those words, the room filled with water from the holes in the heads of those who believed him. If Sears loses the EEOC suit, which outlines an historical pattern of discrimination against women and minorities, potential penalties could do painful surgery on the Sears profit statement. Says one expert: "The amount could exceed EEOC's \$31-million settlement with the steel industry, its \$32-million agreement with General Electric Corp., or come close to American Telephone and Telegraph's agreement to pay \$100 million in compensation to women and minority workers."

In the last year, Sears sales have dipped slight in some its departments.

Equal opportunity is not an ideal a corporation enthusiastically supports in a tight economy or a period of uncertain sales growth. Yet, Sears' record on equal opportunity has been noteworthy. America would be fortunate if all corporations had been so committed.

Between 1966 and 1978, the percentage of blacks employed as officials and managers leaped from 0.4 to 7.2, and as technicians from 1.1 to 12.1. During that same period, the percentage of women professionals went up from 19.2 to

66

THERE was a drink machine in the studio and I knew how to hit it in a certain way and get pop without putting any money in. And that's what I did. But that night I felt so guilty I couldn't sleep. I just had to clear my conscience. So at three o'clock in the morning I got out of bed, found some money and put it in the machine to pay for what I'd had. [And that] is the only naughty thing I can recall doing.

—Donny Osmond in interview with People Magazine

We'll take your word on Pamela Kent, of course. What does she look like? Twiggy? Lynn Redgrave? Perhaps you ought to send over her vital statistics, or a picture in a bikini.

—From a memo from New York Times Sunday editor Dan Schwartz to a fellow employee who had recommended a job applicant. The memo turned up during the sex discrimination suit against the NYT. The Times settled.

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59.2 In fact, women now comprise a majority — 56.7 percent — of Sears' 430,000 member workforce, which it complains was once dominated by white males. Further practicing what it has preached on equal rights, Sears ranks second among corporations in the purchase of goods and services from minority-controlled businesses (\$72 million) and ranks first among corporations in deposits in minority-controlled banks, averaging daily deposits of \$3.2 million.

Why, then, would Sears file a lawsuit whose net results would destroy those gains?

Because Sears is responding to a national turn-back-the-civil-rights-clock mood. First, it was the Bakke case in education. Then, the Weber case in employment. Now, it's Sears. The "Unholy Three" of America's second post-Reconstruction era: Bakke, Weber and Sears.

Somehow, Sears is not convinced that blacks are upset by its lawsuit.

Said Sears national news director Ernest L. Arms, "Quite a large number of blacks met with Sears officials and after the meeting, gave them a standing ovation." Asked for their names, Arms was unable to supply them. Mind you now, the national news director.

Why hadn't Sears released that laudatory statement by the blacks attending the meeting? "That's up to them," a straight-faced Arms replied without winking.

Over the years, Sears has been one of the country's more sympathetic supporters of civil rights. Each year, it has given \$20,000 to the National Urban League, and \$20,000 to the NAACP, and since 1924, has supported the Chicago Urban League.

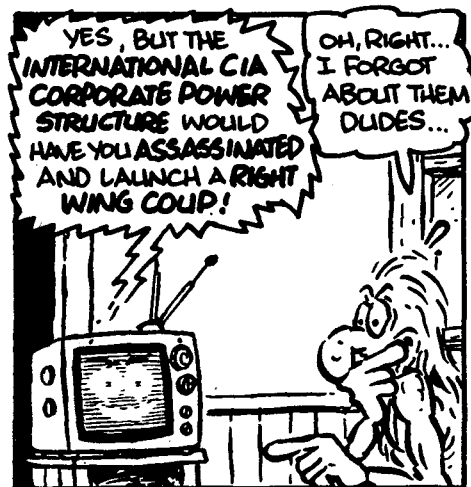
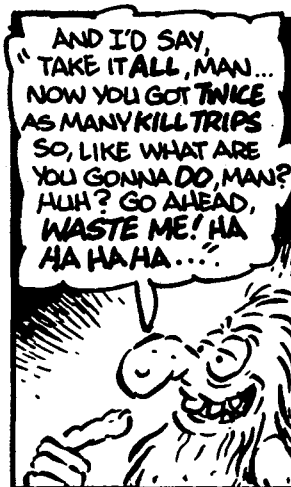
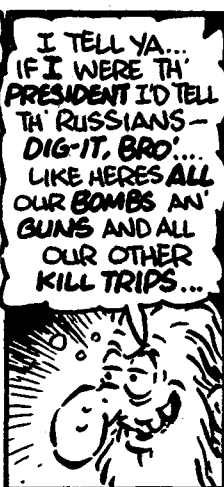
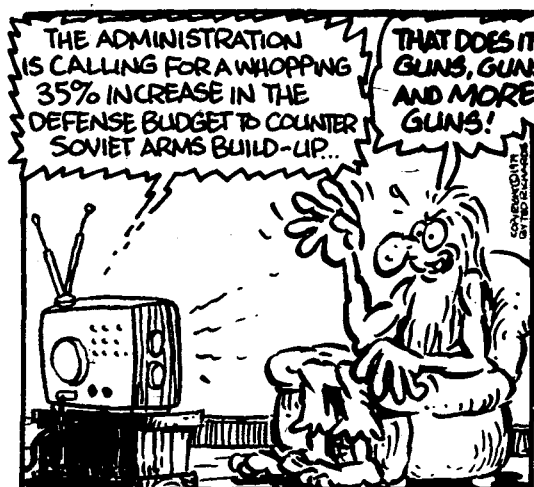
All the more reason why it took unusual courage for National Urban League President Vernon Jordan to lament the implications of the Sears lawsuit. Jordan's criticism recalls Voltaire's classic definition of free speech (especially for newspaper columnists). In a letter to Madame du Deffand, the French essayist wrote: "I advise you to go on living solely to enrage those who are paying your annuities. It is the only pleasure I have left."

Jordan's comments may unsettle Sears officials. In a column, Jordan wrote: "If the Sears suit results in a clarification of government regulations, it will have served a good purpose. If it becomes part of the attack on the principle of affirmative action in this post-Bakke era, it could have a harmful effect. I'm afraid this suit will give aid and comfort to the enemies of affirmative action."

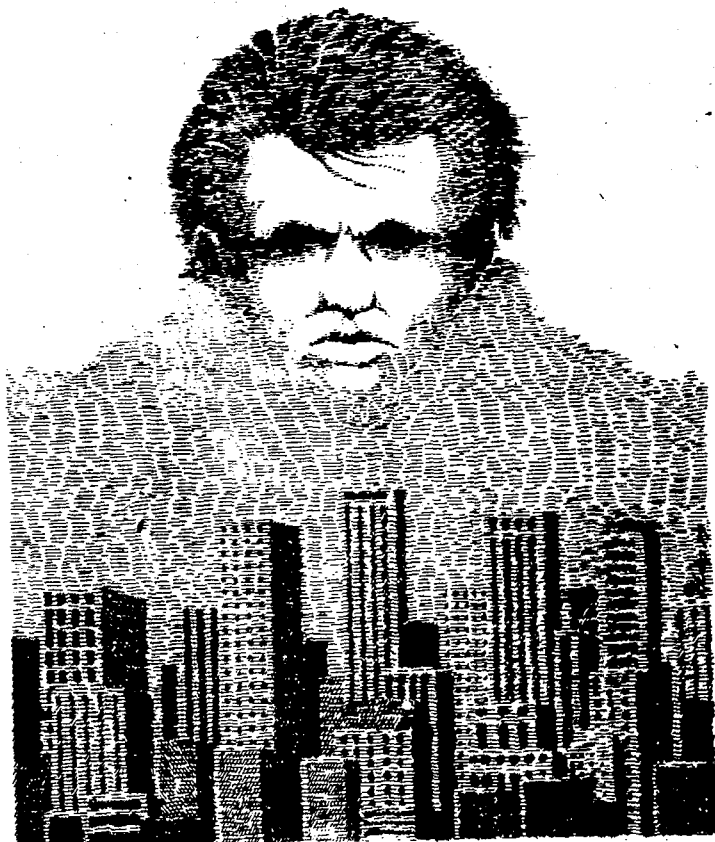
The greatest tragedy of the Sears lawsuit is that its executives don't have the slightest understanding in 1979 of what Jordan is talking about.

Philadelphia Daily News

THE FORTY YEAR OLD HIPPIE



By TED RICHARDS



THIS IS JUST HOW WE LIVE

IAN THE THOMAS

HE STANDS AMID A moonscrap of decay. Beyond where eyes can see, building after building burnt, empty, filled with rubble, crushed brick, warped tin, maybe one intact wall scratched with graffiti that speaks of living.

A rain-softened cardboard box moves over the rubble as if propelled by a steady wind. Nato lifts a sharpened broom handle above his head. He screams and sends the spear flying through the air. The box is still. He motions to me with his hand as he kicks the box over. Its heart still faintly pumping, the cat-sized rat jerks its head one last time. Nato's laugh starts in his belly, spilling out of his throat, ending in a scream.

We walk over to Chisholm Street, a street with no buildings, no people. Against the boarded, blue, empty Lirico Cultural Hijos de Quisequeya building I load another cassette in my tape recorder.

"If you write what is true, why don't things change?" he asks me. "Why do people want to know about us? Why do you want to know about us? Can you help. Not only money, but making buildings again. Making nice trees for people and jobs for men. Why do people want to know if it don't mean nothing?"

Nato takes the tape recorder from my shoulder bag and holds the mike to my mouth. We walk over to Jefferson Place where his mother lives. Two small children, barefoot, play in two burned out cars that sit in the middle of the street. The children stop playing as we pass, calling out, "What are you doing? You TV mens? Huh, lady, you TV?"

Nato laughs at them, shaking his head, "I'm TV and I'm making her a star."

We walk into the doorless hallway of his mother's building. The first floor is empty. All the apartments stripped of doors, windows, floorboards, fixtures. A little girl, maybe three or four, sits in a discarded tire at the top of the stairs.

Inside his mother's apartment it's hot, dark, airless. A tin pail full of human excrement sits in a bathtub in the kitchen. Nato takes the pail and dumps it out a bedroom window.

"That's why I stay at the clubhouse," he tells me, as he straightens the covers of the one bed that fills the front room. "My mother don't have any water here and my sister leave her kids off. Mama can't run them outside every time they got to shit."

I ask him if he wants to do the taping there.

"Where can we go? Downtown? Where you live. I don't like it too much down there, so I stay up here. Right?"

He flips the tape machine on, rewinding the tape and playing back my words. I hear myself telling him to say anything he wants. We hear the background noises of children shouting, firetrucks, screaming police sirens, the stillness of the empty deserted blocks we walked down. Fifteen minutes of breathing ends the tape.

Nato leans back on the bed, his boots resting on the paisley coverlet. He closes his eyes and puts the mike on his chest. He clears his throat and sings "Do re mi . . . testing, testing."

Outside a dog barks and a woman screams at a child in Spanish. Nato speaks.

"My name is Nato. I am fifteen years old. I am a member of the Savage Nomads. We are cold-blooded and we don't take no shit from nobody. Today I'm talking to the world. I am just talking what I want to talk.

"I been raised in the gangs. Like my brothers were, only they're in jail now and one got on junk so my mother said he's dead. Gangs are families. Like brothers and sisters all together. We rumble cause you have to show blood. Blood is strength. In the Bronx there's lots of blood.

"People say gangs is bad. Not to me. Gangs help each other, but we fight if there's static. This is just how we live. School don't mean nothing. They don't teach you head for jobs and living. Eating too. Schools don't teach you head to eat.

"You ask me who I am. I am somebody. Down East 139th Street they say, 'No trouble in stores.' Then they throw you out. So maybe we burn them. Then they gone. We still here. We still somebody.

"This is our country up here, like a whole world. Everybody took the money and went, but the gangs stay. We own all this land and all these buildings. If we got money like a country we could rule this place like kings.

"They say gangs will die. They say gangs come and go. But the Savage Nomads is forever. Even people, like adults, tip their hats to us. Cause we are like polices.

"Do you remember when we went downtown to your house in the winter? There I liked the looks. You know, the prettiness. But I don't feel like me. I feel people don't like me. Like they're smelling me and they don't like how I smell. Up here we are all in this together.

"Some people could leave but they don't cause people is real and they stick together. I know there's another world like the one on TV. But this is a world, too.

"If you write gang things people will think we just party and rumble. But mostly we make families with real weddings. Some girls get down with every dude, but really we believe in families.

"My mother don't want me in no gang. But here you have to be. Everybody beat on you if you not a member. Gangs is protection. When I wear my colors I get respect. Since I been eleven I been in gangs. First just one small one named the Masked Marauders. Just four of us. We control Tiffany Street. We do crib jobs to make some change. Taking off old ladies and kids. But that's jive time and other gangs would take us off if we step out our territory.

"Up here everybody packs. I don't carry heavy hardware like a .45. Too much kick with that sucker. Too much like a rifle. I just carry a .32 automatic. I got my first piece when I was twelve. I stole it off a junkie. That's when my friend, Frankie, got hit over on Melrose Avenue. Two dudes just took him off. They said he stole their dog. It weren't true but they pumped him in the face.

"I walked across the George Washington Bridge that day. This white toll man said get off the bridge. I shot at him twice. They never wrote down one word in the papers but I shot at him twice.

"I wanted to get away that day. My mother told me my father lives in Jersey. I was going to see him. Maybe he had some money for me. I didn't find him so I just walked around in those big parks over there.

"That's when I joined the Savage Nomads. Big Man took me in. He speaks like a law thinker does cause he done heavy time. He don't want the gangs to fight and he don't let no cliques fight. He says that white people want us to fight each other then they don't have to deal with us.

"You talk with Big Man and he scares you like something bad. That's the prison eyes he has. He's a cool nigger with dead eyes like the devil. Even cops respect him cause they say he took off three guys at once.

"What else can I say? Maybe what I'd like to be if I get to be someone important. I would buy my mother a house and build a real clubhouse with apartments. Sometimes you have to turn your heart cold because it's too much here. I like it cause we own it. It's ours. But it ain't much. It ain't nothing. If I did what you do and write things down for reading then I would write some real things that people would get all shook up about.

"Sometimes I think this is wrong. That's it. It's just wrong. Not for me cause I'm a man. But for little children growing up here. They see nothing and then they feel nothing. I know that some people have money and cars and food. Then you think 'why can't I have that.' But what good does thinking do?

"I been raised here from the time when buildings were more pretty and parks had trees. Now we don't have anything. But you get with your clique and you talk and party and get high. You can feel good. Like somebody.

"This here, what you been hearing is me. That life and times of Nato. N-A-T-O in the year of our Lord, 1978. The End."

IAN THE Thomas is the author of five children's books and a novel, 'The Time Junkie.' She lives in New York City and writes frequently for the Village Voice.

(C)PNS 1979



Leonard Cohen photo

THE TEACHERS' STRIKE: NO ONE'S ON OUR SIDE

IT WOULD be nice to think that the teachers' strike was an aberration, one of those transitory rhubarbs that distracts and frustrates government — a sort of Barbara Sizemore affair with mass participation, something we would survive, sooner or later returning to sanity.

Unfortunately, it isn't so. The teachers' strike represented something far more dismal than passing excess; it was in fact the school system norm coming out of the closet: all the silliness, posturing, petty self-interest, incompetence, political and bureaucratic jingoism, conceptual dyslexia, and fundamental heartlessness parading in full view.

It was nothing new. You just got to see it this time.

If you couldn't make much sense out of it you were at the end of a long line. Neither side made much sense or tried particularly hard to do so. There could have been some logic to the school board precipitating the strike by ending the union dues check-off. The school board could have gone to the mat to end the system's tolerance and reward of child-destroying instruction; it could have fought to allow schools to choose teachers on the basis of ability rather than length of service; it could have attacked the assembly-line unionism of the AFT in some meaningful way. But it didn't choose to. Only in minor ways — however it came out — would the contract affect basic educational policy, ways so insignificant that the board could not convince its own constituency that it was worth the candle.

In fact, the board didn't even try to convince the parents of its position until the strike was under way. The board had the power, thanks to the efforts of Betty Ann Kane, to hold public hearings on the status of the negotiations, to drum up public support, to hear from the people most directly affected how they felt about such issues as a longer day for teachers and how much power teachers should have to assign grades. But it chose to ignore this option because, one must conclude, it really didn't care what the parents thought. One school board member said as much to a PTA president during the strike: "You can pass all the resolutions you want; it won't change my mind one bit."

The union was just as arrogant, which was kind of stupid, because when some of the issues in the strike finally began filtering through to the public after the fact, there was sympathy for the teachers' position. Not only did it seem that the board had deliberately started the strike (by cancelling the old contract) but if you figured it out on an hourly basis, the teachers were being asked to give a couple of thousand dollars worth of their time for nothing.

Granted that the union had agreed to negotiate the issue of a longer day when it got a pay raise some years back, but history notwithstanding, no union (and not many unorganized workers either) are going to donate \$2000 worth of their time these days.

I couldn't find many parents who thought it would make much difference even if they did. True, DC teachers have it easy compared to other jurisdictions, true there are teachers who drive up to the building five minutes before nine and leave as the closing bell is still sounding its overtones, but it was difficult to see how keeping these teachers in the building another hour every day or two weeks longer in the year was going to have any significant impact on test scores or, more importantly, education. Parents, who have to deal with the reality of public education uninsulated by the malice-in-wonderland atmosphere of the Presidential Building, were not as certain as the board that things would get better simply by keeping teachers after school.

But with his usual vision, Bill Simons managed to blow his advantage. No sooner were the parents edging towards the union position when he upped the ante, talked about wanting salary increases, hardened his line, and turned to other unions for support, rather than to the parents. Once again the parents were locked out.

There was a time, and it was not so long ago, when many thought parents had a role in public education. In the participatory sixties, there was a strong movement towards community control of the schools. It became a major political issue in places like New York City. Here in DC it was accepted as ideology if not fact. Politicians gave it lip service even when

they did nothing to further it. What was going on in Adams Morgan was news, parents got organized, and in some schools, at least, they gained significant say in the selection of teachers and other matters.

But participation gave way to apathy and struggles between neighborhoods and the power structure were overwhelmed by battles between various elements of that structure. A modicum of self-government was introduced in DC, which seemed an adequate substitute for community control. Finally, enrollments declined and money became tight. Experiments were quietly dropped, no one talked much of demonstration projects any more, the system retreated from its commitment to decentralization and teacher selection procedures became meaningless in the face of a growing pool of unassigned staff with tenure.

Few in the school administration, on the board, with the union, or even in the communities, seemed to care. The parents were too apathetic, frustrated or unaware to deal with the shifting current. Efforts to start a parents union floundered. Even cuts in the school budget attracted little parent interest.

The administration put its faith in yet another of a never-ending procession of educational cults, this time the complex and elusive Competency Based Curriculum. The board, which at its previous worse, had always had at least one Julius Hobson or Marty Swaim to speak of things that others ignored, lacked even its voices in the wilderness. And Bill Simons lost imaginative aides like Jeanne Walton and became just another dreary union boss.

The factions continued fighting but now they had one thing in common: all felt it safe to ignore the parents and the kids. The union pursued its narrow goals as if the school system was just another corporation. The board contented itself with its irrelevant bickering. The administration played its internal power games and wrote its memos. And even Vince Reed turned every question and issue around, like a Werner Erhard of education, to focus on his own version of est: CBC.

When the strike came there was no one to represent the basic constituency of the school system: the children and their parents. And the parents, having failed to organize on their

own behalf while there was still time, looked on helplessly. One parent said it reminded him of the story of the man who collided with a streetcar. The man told the judge that he was going down the street side-by-side with the trolley for several blocks "when all at once the trolley suddenly turned." A streetcar doesn't just suddenly turn, and a school system doesn't just suddenly go on strike.

As I write there is no solution in sight. It won't mean much when one is found, because any contract will be, as it has been in the past, an agreement between two parties — the board and the union — against a third: the children. People are talking about getting things back to normal, but normalcy in the DC school system is not a happy state. Normalcy is failure, inertia, lack of imagination, incompetence and consigning children to what Julius Hobson used to call "the economic and social junk-heap."

I used to think that Vince Reed might change this. I no longer do. Reed is the best superintendent we've had in several decades and, given the law of averages, the best we're likely to get in several more. He's made some improvements and offered a sense of purpose.

But one person can't do it. Worse, Reed (although he'd never admit it) has already surrendered. He has put all his hopes in CBC, a rigidly controlled system that even the dumbest teacher in the system can use with some benefit to the student.

And that's just it. A system which assumed quality teaching wouldn't need CBC; it wouldn't need to look over the shoulder of its teachers every step of the way. CBC is, in a sense, a form of substitute teaching, a way to provide learning without a decent teacher in the classroom. Ingenious, yes. But an admission of failure as well.

There are plenty of good teachers in DC who don't need CBC, any more than they need the stereotyped cartoon of teachers that has developed because of the condoned inadequacies of their peers. They need supplies, logistical support and encouragement. They need recognition and respect from the system. Instead the message from the Presidential Building is that the shirkers and the stupid will be treated as well as they.

Principals, parents, teachers, and many kids know who the good teachers are. Maybe the system does too, but it is either too afraid or too indifferent to do something about it. It would rather develop an educational system that any idiot can operate than do something about people who are teaching who shouldn't be. This not only rewards the bad teachers; it demeans and frustrates the good ones.

But such an approach is almost inevitable

when you lay a largely redundant bureaucracy atop what is basically a fairly simple and direct business: a teacher teaching a student.

We are told the system is necessary for decent public education. But where is the evidence?

If the DC school bureaucracy is so essential how do schools like Sidwell and St. Albans survive without its parallel?

Why is my friend — who has spent five years on the school board of a small town dealing with a system that has only 14 fulltime teachers — not clamoring for the virtues of a centralized school district?

Where are the efficiencies in getting textbooks and other supplies that a centralized system allegedly provides?

Where are the cost savings?

You don't have to get into educational philosophy at all. The system breaks down at its simplest level: supply and logistics. If it does not work at this level why is there reason to believe that it is competent in the more sophisticated realms of curriculum design, principal assignment or teacher evaluation?

I served as a PTA president for a year and I can't remember a single thing the downtown system did for our school we couldn't have done just as well ourselves, and probably for less cost. When someone in the bureaucracy did prove helpful, it was, more often than not, in straightening out a mistake that someone in the bureaucracy had made.

What I do recall, and vividly, were hassles over supplies, trying to figure out how to get a bus for a field trip, worrying over arbitrary decisions affecting the staff, conning the regional superintendent out of some paint so volunteers could fix up a school supposedly maintained by tax dollars, and a set of shoddy building blocks for the pre-kindergarten that arrived months late. The blocks were improperly bevelled, some had splinters and all were of inferior quality. When we looked into it, we found that the company we had named in our order would no longer supply the DC school system because it was so slow in paying its bills. So we got another bidder's rejects. For that we need a system?

You may think I've wandered from the strike. I haven't. For, you see, the strike was not just unnecessary because of the irrelevant and irrational positions taken by the parties involved; the parties themselves are fundamentally irrelevant and irrational. A centralized administration, a centralized school board and a union as petty as the WTU have little to contribute to public education. It was an unnecessary strike against an unnecessary system.

And the system isn't going to change unless parents and teachers start rejecting the corpo-

The Barry-Dixon Astrodud

NOT content with merely fouling up Mt. Vernon Square, City Council Chair Arrington Dixon last month took the bulldozers to the city charter as well. At his behest the city council voted to exclude capital construction projects from the provisions of the referendum law. The immediate effect of this would be to prevent a referendum on the convention center.

The decision will be taken to court since the action of the council limits rights granted the people in the city charter.

Reddi Kilowatt sprung his amendment to the referendum enabling legislation at the last minute, claiming that it was not a substantive matter, thus avoiding a second vote on it. A number of councilmembers, as well as Dixon's own newly appointed counsel, didn't think it was legal, but Dixon was not about to allow mere technicalities prevent him from serving his major campaign contributors.

It's up to the courts now, but for the record you should know (and remember) who was on the side of the public's right to referendum and who wasn't:

Those who joined Dixon in killing the opportunity for a referendum on the convention center were: Jerry Moore, William Spaulding, Willie Hardy, Wilhelmina Rolark, John Wilson.

Those who opposed the action were: Dave Clarke, Betty Ann Kane, Hilda Mason, John Ray and Polly Shackleton.

Nadine Winter, who has been critical of the center, abstained, thereby allowing the measure to pass, so she was not only wrong but mugwumpish as well.

And Marion Barry, of course, shares Dixon's deep feeling that the people should not be allowed to decide the convention center question.

rate model that has been placed atop what is, at its heart, an individual act: teaching. Both the union and the school administration have a vested interest in institutionalizing, regimenting and centralizing what should be individual, free and decentralized. We do not have to choose sides at times like these; both sides are against us.

But we won't be able to do anything as long as parents refuse to organize and demand control that should be in the community and as long as good teachers accept the union's myth that community power is a threat to their security. True, community control is a threat to bad teachers. But that is as it should be. Good teachers would not only have security, they would have respect, instead of being treated like pawns by both their union and their employer.

The schools must be taken away from those using them for political and bureaucratic aggrandizement and given back to those who really care what happens in them. This includes not only parents and children, but teachers and principals as well. We don't need a full master plan right now, although one can envision a system in which every high school and its feeder schools were under the control of its own school board and superintendent. What we do need now is the will to alter the way education is controlled in this city and organizations that will put that will into action. Until that happens, the difference between when the teachers are on strike and when they are not will be far, far less than it should be.

—SAM SMITH

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HERE's a thought to throw into the convention center pot: between 1970 and 1976 (the last year for which we have figures) the outstanding per capita debt in DC rose from \$789 to \$3,423. In 1970, seven states had a higher per capita debt than DC. By 1976, only Alaska did.

FROM the mouth of school board member Bettie Benjamin: "I do not intend to associate myself with remarks made by Mr. Shaffer-Corona, although I agree with them."

An endorsement & some considerations

Just for defying his patron, the mayor, and going with the people on the convention center, John Ray deserves a full term on the city council. We also think he's capable and concerned and a potentially crucial vote on issues where progressive need all the help they can get. We happily endorse him in the May 1 election.

In the school board races, we are just as confused as everyone else. Rather than endorse anyone in the multi-candidate field, we'll simply say that you might consider in the at-large race either Eugene Kinlow, who is chair of the Anacostia Community School Board, or Dick Brown, longtime educational activist.

ADD TO YOUR list of apartment buildings on the endangered species list: The Chastleton. Norman Bernstein wants to sell it for condo conversion. Price: \$4 million. It went for \$2.5 million in 1967. Tenants — a mixed bag of moderate income dwellers — are trying to come up with a way to buy it and turn it into a co-op. One of the concerns is that if it is converted, Ross Elementary will lose about 30 children and perhaps its own lease on life.

THE INSTITUTE FOR POLICY STUDIES's fight against oppression in all its pernicious forms has been suspended long enough for IPS to buy the old Anchor-age Building, at Conn. & Que, double the rents and kick out a forty-year tenant, Walpole's linen store. The Dupont Circle Commission is lodging a protest.

THERE ARE some 1200 accredited Washington newspaper correspondents, but less than one percent of them are black. . . . The Post and the Star, incident-

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ally, have considerably worse records in hiring minorities than some papers in towns with a smaller black population say figures published in the Columbia Journalism Review.

WE DIDN'T SEE it noted in all the fuss about school board member Frank Shaffer-Corona going to Cuba that Cuba is one of the few countries that had an illiteracy problem and managed to do something about it. Maybe we should send the whole school board down there.

FIELDS OF PLENTY, the long-time non-profit food store in Adams Morgan, is in trouble. The Rock Creek Monitor reports: "Fields. . . had some guests from the government. . . who made it clear that anyone who continued to work at the store would be arrested."

"Fields has had no license to operate as a business as a result of some run-ins from the health department. The Department of Licenses has made it clear that it wants the store to close — period. The Office of the Corporation Counsel is backing it up. One Fields worker says that the closure, combined with a \$6000 debt to the IRS, 'could mean the end of the store.'"

JIM GIBSON, the city's new planning honcho is getting low marks from members of a new citizens planning coalition who met with him in February. Says the Capitol Hill Restoration Society newsletter: "With great disappointment, coalition members heard Mr. Gibson express the same revenue-raising attitude toward planning which has dominated this city for more than a decade." . . . "They must have got the infrastructure tango," commented one observer familiar with Gibson's baroque explanatory style. . . . Meanwhile the coalition has recommended four good people to fill a vacancy on the Zoning Commission: Bert Anderson, Peter Craig, Carol Santos and Fred Thomas.

DOUG SCHNEIDER says he means business about ending government employee subsidized parking. He told a House subcommittee that the city would go to court if the feds don't follow the new clean air plan that goes into effect July 1. EPA has

demanding the plan, and if it is approved, DC could argue that, in Schneider's words, "It is a plan we are required by federal law to enforce."

A GROUP CALLED Independent Living for the Handicapped is seeking to convert the old Carberry School on Capitol Hill into 12 apartments so that handicapped people who might otherwise be institutionalized can live in their own homes. ILH has received a loan commitment from HUD and support from local civic associations. (Info: John Collins, 3841 Calvert NW, DC 20007, 338-4339)

THE CITY COUNCIL got an unpleasant reminder a few weeks back of what the DC representation amendment won't do for the city. The city's personnel bill was before Senator Thomas Eagleton's subcommittee on Governmental Efficiency and the District of Columbia for review. Eagleton, you may recall, once succinctly described the city's home rule powers as granted by Congress this way: "The lord gave it and the lord can take it away."

The lord, in this case however, just sent back two sections concerning residency requirements and the Hatch Act. The council agreed to the changes but not without some grumbling. Said John Wilson: "I am sick and tired of sitting here for the last three years playing government. I'm getting very frustrated. I have to tell my constituents, 'We can't do this or that because Congress won't let us.'" And Hilda Mason said to her colleagues, "You keep talking about self-government like you got self-government. You don't have it. Congress is still in control."

But Laura Murray of the Star put it best in writing about the incident: "It is as if the parents of an 18-year-old said she could live on her own if they approved of her new apartment, her new job and her new roommate."

That's what Walter Fauntroy calls home rule.

THE FUNNY THING about Marion Barry's complaint that the Star and the Post expected him to do five times as good a job as a white mayor with five times less resources is that a few days earlier he was ruminating to a New York Times reporter about running for the presidency or vice presidency. Said he

Really saving energy

THE INSTITUTE for Local Self-Reliance has issued a 247-page feasibility report on energy self-reliance in the city. The conclusions indicate that, through the use of maximum conservation measures and an increasing reliance on solar energy, more than half of current energy use could be saved. In the process, thousands of direct and indirect jobs would be created.

The report says that the city, excluding the federal government, paid almost \$500 million for energy in 1977, of which only \$70 million was returned in the form of wages, taxes or dividends to the local economy.

"While the District's energy consumption declined by more than 15% since 1972, the total amount paid has increased by almost 80% as a result of rapidly rising energy prices," says David Morris, project director. "If the District were compared to a nation, its energy balance of payments picture would be extremely lop-sided. We need to reduce the amount exported, and recycle the amount spent on energy to benefit the local economy."

"Fortunately," Morris continues, "the District, unlike most cities, has the tools to fashion such a program. It is the only city with direct jurisdiction over the public service commission. The DC government consumes 12% of the total energy, making it possible to lead the way as a model for energy self-reliance."

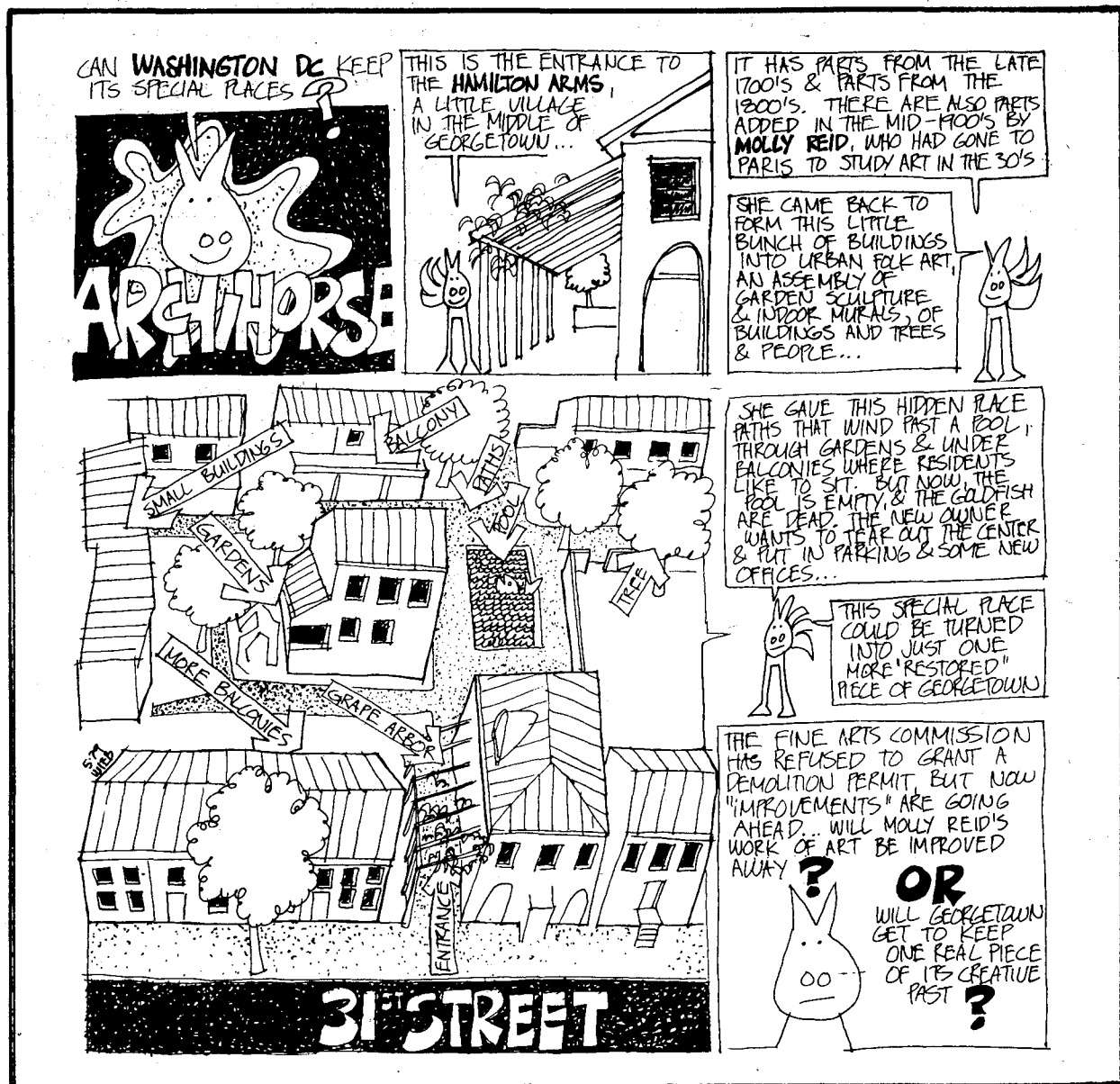
The report notes that, if little is done, energy expenditures will take an increasing portion of the residents' taxes and wages. The DC government already spends more on energy to conduct its own operations than it does on the entire DC court system, and almost as much as it is spending on the University of the District of Columbia. The report says that private energy costs now represent over 20% of the operating costs of apartment buildings, a considerable increase over 1972 when these costs represented about 8-10% of the total. These increases lead to increased rents.

The report emphasizes the multiple benefits of energy self-reliance. The outflow of dollars is reduced, local jobs are created, and, once energy saving are achieved, the extra dollars are multiplied through the local economy. For instance, a 30% reduction in residential space heating requirements, achievable in less than five years, would generate almost \$50 million for the local economy, and about 1500 jobs. For every energy dollar not exported, \$2.50 of local economic activity is generated.

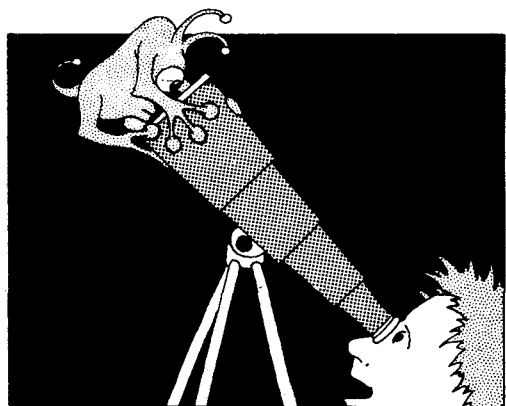
Researchers concluded that solar energy is currently marginally economical for water heating where it competes with electric hot water heating. Although there are only 4000 units with such systems, the report recommends a vigorous program to establish a solar industry, for it foresees a rapid expansion in the market in the years ahead.

The report sees the height limitation on buildings, and the preponderance of flat rooftops, as an asset for the use of solar energy. New advances in solar technology permit the generation of heat and electricity. The report foresees that within the next 10-15 years some neighborhoods could be totally self-sufficient using the sun's energy, although this would not be the case in the more dense downtown areas.

"The strong, formal structure of neighborhood organizations in the District makes the difference between a nominal energy conservation program and a vigorous one," Morris points out. The report recommends a competition among neighborhoods for cash awards for those which save the most money. You can contact the Institute for Local Self-Reliance at 232-4108.



was still young enough to think about it. Wonder whether he'd have five times less resources if he became vice president, too. . . . Said one Post reporter of Barry's slam: "What the fuck does he want? We made him mayor didn't we?"



WE DON'T RUN enough baby news in this paper, so here is some. In 1977, the last year for which there are full statistics, there were 9885 births in the city. Nineteen percent of these occurred in Ward 8, six percent in Ward Three. Twenty-three percent of the babies had mothers under 20, 53% were born out of wedlock, 13% were immature babies (under 2500 grams), 14% were premature and 9% received inadequate prenatal care (this is probably an undercount; there are no figures on one-third of the babies). . . .

Also in 1977 there were 7 births to mothers 45 and older and 60 to mothers 40-44.

INDIVIDUALS, state and local agencies, nonprofit groups and small businesses can get appropriate technology grants of up to \$50,000 from the Department of Energy. Grants cover concepts, projects and demonstrations. Applicable areas include solar technologies, use of wood or wood wastes, aquaculture, energy conservation measures and solar storage systems. To get details, write Appropriate Technology Program, Department of Energy, Region III, 1421 Cherry St., Philadelphia Pa. 19102.

YOU HEAR A LOT about numbers, bingo and lotteries in discussions of legalized gambling, but it should be noted that Richard Lyon and Martin Firestone have registered as city lobbyists for the Washington Jai Alai Corporation. Jai Alai is an extraordinarily fast sport typically accompanied by pari-mutual betting.

THOSE ASSESSMENTS

WE HATE TO TRY TO explain this but here goes: Following legal action against the city (and a Gazette expose), property tax assessments here were put on a more rational basis — including neighborhood sales-assessment ratio studies, regular reassessment etc. But — and this is a big but — the reforms left gaping holes. Such as:

- The question of individual inequity in assessing homes was not dealt with. Thus if you and your neighbor live in identical houses assessed at \$70,000 and your neighbor goes downtown and gets the assessment lowered but you don't, the city will do nothing to correct the disparity. Yearly percentage increases will, in fact, increase the gap between the assessment on the two houses. So check assessments on comparable homes. You may be surprised.

- To discourage people from appealing, homes are generally not assessed at market value. Thus, even though you discover apparent inequities in assessments in your block, you will be wary of appealing because you know your home is below market value.

- The neighborhoods, as defined by the city, are not homogenous and therefore neighborhood sales-assessment ratio studies can obscure real inequities.

- The city does not really assess. What it does is called "trending." This is a guestimate based on the presumed increase in value in a neighborhood. Further, in part because of the suits against the city, the assessors apparently start with the neighborhood "trend" and work backwards. This may help to explain why some land assessments jumped dramatically this year. Chief assessor Donald Beach told the Star that people "should ignore whatever allocation [between land and building] is there, because that's not critical, and look at the total number, which is what their property is worth." Now when an assessor says that he's not assessing. Apparently, having decided for whatever reasons that land values were too low, the assessors arbitrarily lowered the increase (or even lowered the assessment in some cases) on houses to make the total figure come out right.

- Not only does this capricious form of assessing have insurance implications, it represents, by design or accident, a movement towards a site value tax — something which has been argued about in the city but which so far has received no approval by any body. A site value tax (in which land alone is assessed) places a premium on high density development and tends to eliminate less intense uses. It is questionable whether the assessor should be making this sort of planning decision.

What this all adds up to is that the city's assessing procedures are a lot fairer than they used to be, but that there is still much inequity in the system, which those downtown seem inclined to ignore.



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SOME OF ACTIVIST George Frain's old friends were a little surprised to learn in the Star that he had trucked on down to Annapolis to testify against the DC voting amendment. Well, relax. George says the Star got it all wrong. In a letter to that paper he pointed out that far from the implication in the story he was basically in support of the position outlined by the Baltimore Sun (and had said so in his prepared testimony). The Sun, in an editorial said:

"There are ways for District residents to be represented in Congress that do not damage or threaten the constitutional idea. The delegate in the House could be made a representative with voting rights, on the grounds that the House represents people, not states. Or the District could become a state. Or the residential and commercial parts of the District could be ceded back to Maryland. Or just the populace could be technically ceded back for the sole purpose of voting in Congressional elections."

Says George: "I compliment the Sun for calling for full voting rights, not the half-loaf of the Kennedy - Fauntroy amendment which reserves major rights to the Congress. . . Why did Sen. Kennedy and Del. Fauntroy back a certain loser when they must have known this amendment would be defeated and DC voting rights set back at least a decade or more?"

Good question.

SPEC WRECK?

DON'T BE SURPRISED if the city's speculation tax is successfully challenged in court. Marion Barry (then on the council) may have made it partially or fully illegal. The problem is that the city can not tax the personal income of non-residents, although it can tax non-resident business income. The way the anti-speculation tax was originally drafted it applied to people who sold several houses in a short period of time. They were classified as dealers i.e. a business. But the bill came out without this provision and as it now stands applies the tax to people who, by congressional mandate, don't have to pay it. Could the whole tax be thrown out? Or could it only apply to residents, thereby allowing suburbanites and members of Congress to continue to speculate? Could you avoid the tax by moving out of town before you sold your house? Watch your local courts. This could be a big and embarrassing one.

DHR is trying to get special permission from the feds to distribute food stamps through grocery stores. . . . Posties are upset over management's handling of pay during the Great Blizzard. Seems some "essential" people were picked up by company-dispatched four-wheel drive vehicles, and distributors were eligible for up to \$300 for extra time and expense incurred while delivering the gospel during the storm. Those who slogged into work got their regular salary - and those who couldn't make it (or didn't rate a company jeep) got docked vacation days.

FIFTY-EIGHT of Marion Barry's 82 top aides are women. Sixty-eight are black and 24 are white. . . . Gays are continuing the pressure on the cops to end discrimination and improve the treatment of gay crime victims. Not much progress reported. New report from the Gay Activist Alliance should be out soon.



SEVERAL MONTHS back the Gazette ran an article pointing out the federal government's complicity in the subsidization of gentrification. Now council-member John Wilson wants to know whether the practices of the FHA during the 1960s in urban renewal areas, violated the National Housing Act. Says Wilson: back in the 60s when the original urban renewal legislation was passed by Congress, both condominiums and cooperatives were extremely rare. "In

fact, there is every good reason to believe that when the DC Redevelopment Land Authority - or any similar body across the country - approved an urban renewal project under the National Housing Act, they meant the word 'apartment' to mean a rental unit now and forever." Wilson wants Mayor Barry to look into this.

HEART PUMPERS

WITH only a dozen city-owned ambulances, critical minutes can be lost waiting for them. If you have a heart attack, for example, and aid comes in the first minute, your chances of survival are 95%. If you are unassisted for eight minutes, the chances go down to 2%.

So beginning February 9, the Fire Department has been sending fire trucks and/or rescue squads in such cases - as well as ambulances. In the first two weeks the fire equipment responded to 666 calls - getting there in an average of 2 minutes, compared with ten minutes for an ambulance. More than 900 firefighters are now qualified as emergency medical technicians.

The fire vehicles are not only being sent in cases of cardiac arrests but in those involving severe chest pains, difficulty in breathing, electrocutions, gunshot or severe stab wounds, multiple fractures and near drownings.

IT'S a little late to be telling you this, but remember it for next year. During the big blizzard, Gusti's Restaurant shoveled an eight inch trench in the snow along the sidewalks and down to the curb to force the water from the melting snow to flow into the sewers and not collect on the sidewalks. The Department of Environmental Services recommends the procedure.

VARIOUS proposals to bring the DC income tax law into conformity with the federal code are kicking around the council. One reason is that a family of four, for example, would typically pay no income tax to the feds until it earned \$8000. You'd start paying DC at \$4000. The same sort of disparity exists for other categories as well.

BIKE LOCKERS are now available at the Dupont Circle, Foggy Bottom, Potomac Avenue, Takoma, Union Station, RI Avenue, Brookland, Stadium and Silver Spring stations. You can rent them, including lock, for \$70 a year. For info or an application blank call Metro at 637-1327.

DON'T Miss the Appropriate Community Technology Fair/Conference coming to the Mall April 27-May 1. A complete self-sufficient model community is being planned and there will be speakers, exhibitors and entertainers. You can find out more by calling 393-AT79.

DC has the fourth highest rate of TB in the country, three times the national average. Nevertheless, the city's TB program control staff has been cut back for budgetary reasons.

Douglas R. Goodhill, photographs
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GETTING MARRIED IN DC? Creative, non-religious, or do-it-yourself ceremonies. Rev. Paul McKnight, 667-0507. ap

CHANGES: Bill Kraus, budget buff at city hall, is off to Detroit to work for his hometown mayor. . . . The able Pat Minor has left the city council to take Dwight Cropp's old job at the school board. . . Angela Shelby takes over from Bob Boyd at DC Citizens for Better Public Education. She's been in career education and was a guidance director at an alternative high school in NYC.

THE REASON your phone is always ringing may have something to do with the fact that there are now more than a million phones in DC. . . . Thanks to the great new DC Gov centrex system, city hall is getting more than 3000 calls a day to outdated numbers. But cheer up, the figure was up as high as 5000 a day late last year.

CAPITOL HILL has lost its ASTA Theatre but will be gaining squash courts. The BZA has approved the latter, to be located in the 200 block of D SE.

IF YOU drive your car without a tire in DC, you are subject to a \$25 fine. Just thought you'd like to know. . . . Marion Barry reports that his office receives an average of 180 pieces of correspondence a day. Says replies are sent out within ten business days. . . . There's a nasty rumor around the Post that management is training 35 secretaries in headline-writing just in case there is any more unpleasantness on 15th Street.

OUR NEW DC Appropriations Subcommittee chair, Charles Wilson, says he's interested in rent control and the speculation tax. He also has an interest, incidentally, in four Capitol Hill houses and Elan, the K Street disco.

FOR THE first time in longer than even Jack Eisen can remember, the press room at city hall is about to be renovated. Alan Gripp, the city's official communicator, began drawing up plans after the Post announced it was going to install a computer terminal in the DeeBee's scroungiest chamber. (Don't get your hopes up, all you politicians and bureaucrats, the terminal is in addition to Milton Coleman not in place of him). We all got called down at 8 a.m. to review the plans and hear the sad word that the Carl Bernstein Memorial Sofa would have to go in the name of progress. Alan says the sofa, made famous after Bernstein was found sleeping on it by a Post editor, was built at Lorton. After Watergate, a sign went up over it: "Carl Bernstein Slept Here."

Gripp means business. He announced that he wants the five foot high stack of news releases, budget reports and announcements of Al Russo news conferences removed from Channel Nine's desk prior to the renovation. Aw, c'mon Alan, when we said we wanted to clean up city hall, we didn't mean the press room for crissakes.

WHILE we're on housekeeping items, we'd like to pass on the word to the various city department heads that Sam Starobin knows you've been squirreling away desks, files and typewriters in various basement nooks and would like them sent over to the GSA warehouse where they belong.

INSTANT HOTELS

ONE OF THE INNOVATIONS that the Barry administration seems to be interested in is getting city departments to talk to each other. Housing director Bob Moore and DHR director Al Russo talked, for example, and figured out that they could do something about all the senior citizens in city-owned housing who weren't getting food stamps and other benefits because they were disabled, uninformed or scared to go out. Now, they're setting up eligibility offices in the projects so you can just go downstairs to get what you're entitled to. . . . And planning honcho Jim Gibson checked the variations in agency rules about converting apartments into hotels - a major city problem these days. He discovered that, depending on which agency you talked to, a transient room might be one occupied for less than five days, less than ninety days, or simply one for which the hotel tax had been paid. . . . This latter definition has provided a handy gambit for landlords trying to get out from under rent control. They just pay the hotel tax and, *kazam!*, they are no longer in the apartment business but are genuine hoteliers.

AMERICAN JOURNAL

David Armstrong

HARRISBURG, PA — Once there were dozens of passenger trains rolling through this city on daily runs to New York, Washington, Chicago and points west. Today, there are only six, and one of those, the Amtrak express to Philadelphia, is late. No one in the sparsely attended station seems surprised by this.

The Harrisburg depot is 92 years old. Not long ago, there were quality meals, barber shops and the like here for the convenience of travelers. But they are gone now. So are many of the polished hardwood benches installed in the heyday of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Pennsy's huge stone fireplaces still stand at opposite ends of the waiting rooms, but today there are no fires to chase the chill from winter riders.

Like many American communities, Harrisburg badly needs improved rail passenger facilities. But, like most, it will not get them any time soon. More likely, there will be a tourist complex of shops and restaurants in the renovated shell of the old building. Or perhaps a new parking lot in its place. And no trains.

Instead of upgrading America's shabby railroads, Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams has proposed that 12,000 miles — 43 percent — be slashed from the Amtrak system, while fares are raised by six to ten percent. If Adams's plan is implemented, it will go a long way toward railroading Amtrak, the national rail passenger corporation formed in 1971, into oblivion.

Moreover, Adams's proposals seem to fly in the face of the DOT's own studies. According to the newsletter of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, a rail consumer advocate group, DOT reports show that:

- "The biggest network would have the lowest deficit per passenger mile."
- "Rail, the only energy-efficient mode capable of attracting people out of their automobiles, could reduce the need of the United States to import oil."
- "An improved and coordinated rail/bus/urban transit network, by reducing reliance on the unsafe automobile, would cut down on highway accidents."
- "Track rehabilitation for both freight and passenger trains would lead to reduced highway maintenance costs."

When trains are running well, people like to ride the rails. A Louis Harris poll last year found that 60 percent of Americans favor improved, quality rail service.

Rebuilding the nation's railroads would cost money, to be sure. But then, we already pay billions in direct and indirect subsidies to airports and an interstate highway system that has cost nearly ten times its original estimated price. And it isn't even finished. A fraction of the \$8.6 billion budgeted for superhighways next year could transform Amtrak from a national Toonerville Trolley into a respectable railroad.

The alternative to rehabilitation is more decaying rail centers like Harrisburg, where a traveler moves past rest rooms with blocked drains, down ancient iron stairwells coated with pigeon droppings, to an express train that is an hour and a half overdue.

That would be a pity, because there is more to railroads than whistle-blowing nostalgia. Trains, as the many foreign countries that seriously support them know, can be clean, comfortable, fast and energy-efficient. But they must be subsidized. Nowhere in the world do privately or publicly operated passenger trains turn a profit, as Amtrak is required to do by law.

According to the federal Department of Transportation, Amtrak has lost more than \$3 billion since 1971. Its current annual deficit is some \$500 million. Adams aims to save \$1.4 billion over the next five years by means of the proposed cutbacks.

If the recent past is any indication, however, cutbacks — like earlier austerity moves that eliminated popular runs, ended redcap service, downgraded food quality, allowed aging track to deteriorate dangerously and sacked once grand depots like Harrisburg's — will only result in declining patronage. Which means still greater subsidies. Which will spark further cutbacks, ad infinitum, until passenger trains go the way of the passenger pigeon.

CLEVELAND'S NO BASKET CASE

T.D. Allman

Cleveland's no basket case and Kucinich is no clown. Far from destroying Cleveland, his confrontation politics may have restored the taxpayers's faith that big city government can be on their side. T.D. Allman is a contributing editor of Harper's, east coast editor of the Pacific News Service and wrote this report supported by a grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

CLEVELAND — "The question isn't whether the cities will be 'saved,'" one urban leader observed back during the 'urban crisis,' when cities were supposed to be doomed. "Cities face a promising future."

"The real question is who cities will be saved for: the big corporations and the affluent, or for the poor, the jobless, the people who always seem to be shortchanged by our society. Are cities collections of skyscrapers, or groups of human beings?"

Though he was referring to another city, this all along has been the question behind the political tumult and fiscal crisis in Cleveland. Recently this city's voters gave a resounding answer. They opted for neighborhood power over corporate power, for the kind of city government that aggressively fights for those who elect it, rather than just mediating among special interests.

By nearly two-to-one Cleveland voters bucked the Proposition 13 syndrome, and increased by 50 percent the payroll tax they and suburban commuters must pay. By an even larger margin, they refused to sell the publicly owned Municipal Electric Lighting System which, Mayor Dennis Kucinich charged, was the price Cleveland's powerful and interlocking banking community was demanding to help put the city's troubled, but far from hopeless, finances in order.

The wonder was not that Cleveland voted as it did. For by raising their own taxes, Clevelanders not only voted to keep vital city services and to stave off bankruptcy but to have affluent suburbanites bear most of the cost. Nearly seventy percent of the new revenues will come from commuters who earn their living in Cleveland but live outside the city. The decision to keep MUNY was in many Clevelanders' interest, too. Though the company's machinery is decrepit and serves only 20 percent of the city's residents and does not even generate its own power, it is a useful check on the near monopoly of the privately-owned immensely profitable Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company which wanted to buy it. Though CEI already has been judged guilty by federal regulatory agencies of trying to destroy MUNY through discriminatory power

charges and unfair competition, had the voters decided to sell MUNY the city would have been forced to drop its \$325 million anti-trust suit against the giant utility.

The wonder, instead, was the Cleveland voters in the end were able to make an intelligent choice on the issues in a city that for more than a year has been savaged by clashes of personalities, and treated as some sort of doomed inner city watseland, rather than the basically healthy and important experiment in urban policy that it has become.

The two basic misapprehensions about Cleveland have been, first, that Cleveland is a city in the midst of a dire economic crisis and, second, that the key issue for Clevelanders is not how and for whom their city will be run, but the extraordinary personality of its mayor, 32-year-old Dennis Kucinich.

The truth, however, is that Cleveland is no basketcase, but the center of one of the strongest regional economies in America. And Kucinich, for all his periodic antics and miscalculations, is neither a clown nor a punk as the press and his adversaries have called him. Instead, as his victories in three hotly-contested elections in 15 months proved, he is one of the most effective big city politicians in America today.

To understand both the enmities and loyal-

CAVIAR COVER-UP

AT presstime, we were still waiting for the Post and the Star to 'fess up to a scandal in their midst: namely allegations that some of the biggest by-lines on their pages were on the take from Ardeshir Zahedi, lately ambassador from Iran.

The names have been printed in the New Statesman and the Village Voice. We will not reprint them here on the outside chance that some are in error — except for Rowland Evans who admitted to the New Statesman that "I have had caviar for many years, but I suppose one hundred other reporters in town received it, too."

Ardeshir's largesse to the press is being politely described in journalistic circles as "gifts" but when politicians get involved in such things, reporters generally have stronger terms to describe the pay-off. But even the benign interpretation would not be so bad if the dailies would deal with the issue in the open. In fact, one paper did write a story about the Zahedi scandal which alluded to the possibility that the New Statesman had obtained a copy of the ambassador's gift list, but omitted mentioning that the author was allegedly on it.

Caveat op ed caviar.

ties Kucinich arouses, it is necessary to leave Cleveland's booming downtown and travel out to the neighborhoods of working class, ethnic Cleveland. It is also necessary to leave behind the conventional media images and confront what matters most to Cleveland's voters, the issues.

This is not a world of left-wing flower children, but of factory workers with American decals on their cars, of middle-aged women with thin cloth coats turned up against the cold, who, before they switched their loyalties to Kucinich, three times elected the only Republican mayor of a big American city.

Not long ago the image of cities like Cleveland was of decay, white flight and abandonment. Today the image is of post-industrial 'gentrification,' the rediscovery by young, professional whites of those beautiful inner city brownstones.

But this Cleveland is still a land of foreman and overtime and life on the assembly line, which the white working class has never fled. These are neighborhoods of sturdy clapboard houses that have grown old without growing quaint; of bookstores that don't sell art books but sports magazines printed in Slavic languages.

Here Kucinich is not a bizarre apparition on the evening news, but a neighborhood force everyone calls by his first name.

They are people who fervently believe in an America that no longer believes in them, for whom standing in line at the polling booth — even on a raw February day — is a duty.

When the presidents and chairmen of the big Cleveland corporations call Kucinich a "rabble-rouser," as several of them did in interviews before the recent election, this is the rabble to which they refer. Yet in conversations in places with names like the Settler's Tavern, or in storefront shops selling a dozen kinds of homemade strudel, one hears questions for which the corporate spokesmen and massive bureaucracies have no answers.

Why are ghetto youth bussed miles across town into their neighborhoods, but not into suburbs like Shaker Heights that are closer? If MUNY is worthless, they ask, why is CEI — which never ceases to increase both their electricity bills and its own profits — so eager to put it out of business? If the city is in such dire fiscal straits, why are the banks so hostile to Kucinich just because he tried to deny them tax abatements for multi-million dollar sky-

scrapers built on the most desirable land in the city?

In one of those neighborhood restaurants where Kucinich is a familiar face, an elderly waitress comes up to shake his hand. Outside in the cold, a group of workmen wave to him. At an intersection, three young blacks roll down the windows in their car, even though it is ten degrees. "Hiya, Mayor," they shout. Here Kucinich is not the enfant terrible he seems on TV, or at the Union Club. In his three-piece suit he is the local boy made good.

In an address to the National Press Club last October that was much better received in Washington than it was in downtown Cleveland, Kucinich called Cleveland "a national political laboratory, putting to the test a significant political question: can a city government, based on the support of the poor and working people, increase services, improve the standard of living and the quality of life, and survive politically without the support of big business and even with active opposition?"

What is significant about Cleveland is how consistently Kucinich has tested that question by fighting out the issues on their own merits and letting the electorate decide.

Though the proposed sale of MUNY was the biggest issue, Kucinich's whole term as mayor has been the history of a political leader with an almost maddening conviction that he must not compromise.

Typical was the request for a \$14 million tax abatement for the new \$60 million, 35-story headquarters in downtown Cleveland of the National City Bank — one of the lending institutions that later precipitated Cleveland's default. The bank, with \$2.9 billion in assets, is the most profitable in the nation, in terms of earnings.

In every other big city in America the municipal government — eager to ensure the good will of such a powerful corporation — would have instantly granted the abatement. Kucinich challenged the entire concept. At a time when the city faced fiscal problems, he asked, why should it lower taxes for one of the richest corporations in the world? If the purpose of tax abatements was to help troubled industries stay in cities, why should the tax break go to National City, not to the small and medium-sized concerns that are leaving Cleveland?

Since then the list of corporations Kucin-

ich has refused to give favored treatment reads like the Fortune 500. He also has fired hundreds of incompetent or corrupt city bureaucrats. The result is that Cleveland, almost alone among American cities, has a city government which not only is against "business as usual," but which actively impedes it.

"They say I am a clown," Kucinich observed, before his success in the latest voting. "Let's face it, this city was ruled by clowns for years. They're out to get me because so long as I'm mayor, City Hall won't be a yes-man for corporate interests."

While Kucinich and his closest aides no doubt are often personally acerbic, it is clear that any mayor taking his stand on the issues would have incurred the implacable enmity of the vested interests Kucinich has challenged. Because of Kucinich, for example, CEI still has an anti-trust suit, amount to more than one-third of a billion dollars, pending against it. Every other major politician in the city wanted both to drop the suit and let CEI buy out the competition.

Almost all observers in Cleveland agreed on two things before the recent voting. The first was that the city's fiscal crisis was not of Kucinich's making, but the inheritance of predecessors who countered on "business as usual" to save the city from default. The second agreement was that by denying the banks, Kucinich was not only needlessly risking bankruptcy for the city but committing political suicide himself.

The truth is that politics, Kucinich-style, has not led to the disasters so often predicted, but to some accomplishments that have eluded less acerbic politicians with far better media images. Kucinich himself has prevailed yet again at the polls. In the tradition of Kucinich's populist predecessor at the turn of the century, Tom. L. Johnson — who once wrote "I believe in municipal ownership of all public service monopolies... because if you do not own them they will in time own you" — Cleveland, following the refusal to sell the city-owned utility, now has perhaps the only city government in America that acts as an effective countervailing force to special interests.

And in the era of Prop 13 and the 'taxpayers' revolt,' Kucinich has evidently dispelled enough cynicism among Cleveland voters to have them approve a major tax increase, after turning them down at the polls for years.

"Who governs? That's been the question ever since Kucinich took office," observes Roldo Bartimole, a widely respected local journalist, who produces an independent newsletter. "Corporate executives who make big profits here, but live in the suburbs? Or the people of Cleveland?"

For the third time in little more than year, Cleveland's voters have spoken. Whether the city remains mired in political confrontation and fiscal crisis now depends less on the personal peculiarities of Kucinich than on whether big business and big government will be willing to heed the voices of those in inner cities who so often subsidize, and so seldom share, the benefits of their wealth and power.

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